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Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 191 (2015) 580 – 583

**Procedia**  
Social and Behavioral Sciences

WCES 2014

# Creative Industries And The Place Of The Arts In University Interpreting-Translation Programmes

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## Abstract

In this time of global financial and economic crisis, supporting creative industries is one of the ways to promote economic growth and employment. The European Union perceives the creative industries as closely linked to the cultural industry, and thus attributes it dual functions – economic and cultural. Educational institutions should be among the key partners of local and regional authorities in creating and maintaining the creative potential of communities and regions. As professionals in the education sector – research staff and teachers at Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia, in the present paper we consider the place of the arts in their diverse forms in university interpreting-translation programmes, and through specific examples, we offer suggestions for its integration into the learning process.

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Selection and peer-review under responsibility of the Organizing Committee of WCES 2014

**Keywords:** Creative industries; Creative potential; Creativity; Foreign languages; Arts

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## 1. Introduction

At a time when the world is being tossed from side to side in the midst of deep economic crisis accompanied by serious consequences in the social area, supporting creative industries is a necessity. This sector has been overlooked and underestimated for years, but it is capable of generating new jobs and economic growth at a time of crisis. However, awareness of the significance of creativity, which has been reflected in the new perception of creative sectors, is not a completely new phenomenon. As early as the late 90s, several major American and European cities attempted to attract the so-called creative class (Florida, 2002) to their areas in order to ensure their edge over fierce competition as well as their unique identity. And thus the initial phenomenon of spontaneous gentrification, when artists settled in deteriorating urban districts, contributed to their revival and made them more attractive, was

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followed by targeted gentrification, when representatives of cities and regions deliberately tried to attract creative workers, hoping to restart the deteriorating economy and reverse the outflow of citizens. However, we must mention that gentrification is currently being condemned more and more often, as its resultant regeneration of residential or industrial districts sooner or later drives away residents of lower social class and thus leads to social injustice. Characterised by supporting cultural and creative industries (CCI), ideas, innovation and, of course, creativity, the creative economy is both an alternative and a new economic development model. It is now commonly mentioned in political speeches. It is especially visible and applied in conurbations, where the highly qualified and creative workforce is concentrated. Cities and regions play a primary and irreplaceable role in creating the conditions for supporting CCI, since cultural activities, industrial and research activity, and education are naturally and traditionally concentrated in cities. Because of this, American and European cities have been developing the concept of “creative cities” for several years now (Landry, 2000; Howkins, 2001; Florida, 2002), based on supporting creativity. Creative cities should be characterised by attractiveness and should provide space for individual development as well as more interesting cultural opportunities at the same time. The question is whether, considering the current pace of gentrification and its demand for a more and more mobile population, we will soon witness a revaluation of the present approach to this phenomenon. Cultural and creative sectors of cultural and creative industries include a wide range of creative activities and services. They comprise a set of diverse operators of various sizes (e.g. micro-enterprises, small and medium enterprises, non-governmental organisations, cultural institutions, etc.) operating in various areas related to creativity and innovation. Although these sectors have yet to be clearly defined in the EU, EU institutions consider such sectors as architecture, handicraft, cultural heritage, design, festivals, cinema, radio, television, music production, visual arts, performing arts, archiving, libraries and publishing activity, as well as education and research, to be a part of CCI.

### *1.1. Supporting the creative economy in the EU*

Cultural and creative industries, the creative class, the creative cities and the creative economy have a common denominator – creativity. One could say that creativity is what makes today’s world go round. In response to this trend, the European Union declared 2009 the European Year of Creativity and Innovation. Its main objective was to improve creativity across the entire population, and activities were therefore directed at several areas: the school system, culture, business, media, research, social and regional policy and rural development. The European Commission’s initiative gave rise to the European Creative Industries Alliance (ECIA) which serves to create policies facilitating the development of creative industries in Europe. There is a whole range of periodicals dealing with creative industries published in EU Member States and many initiatives and companies are being established as social and cultural platforms bringing together institutions, businesses, civil initiatives and individuals. Their main objective is the sustainable development of social and cultural infrastructure and support of creative industries in a wide range of social activities, or the creation of a suitable environment for the implementation of innovation projects and business plans in connection with the European cultural landscape. We also cannot forget the EU’s activity in which, based on an initiative by former Greek Minister of Culture Melina Mercouri, selected cities are being awarded the prestigious title of European Capital of Culture. The title is primarily granted to cities in difficult economic situations where this could revive the economy through supporting creative industries. The objective is supporting sustainable development, building permanent partnerships with other cities, raising the city’s profile to the international level, increasing domestic and foreign tourism and expanding its cultural audience (Euractiv, 2010).

## **2. The importance of language learning in supporting the creative economy**

There are many reasons for including language learning in study programmes at all levels, as the importance of language learning in supporting the creative economy is indisputable. We will try to name at least a few of them. Several truly good reasons are stated in the European Parliament’s report of 13 April 2011 (*Report on unlocking the potential of cultural and creative industries (CCI)*) in which CCI are assigned an important role in the support of cultural and language diversity as well as pluralism, social and territorial cohesion and in the promotion of dialogue between cultures across the entire EU. The European Commission is therefore expected to support CCI and education which would enable citizens to acquire creative and intercultural skills, including foreign language

proficiency. The more recent *Report on promoting the European cultural and creative sectors as sources of economic growth and jobs* of 20 August 2013 underlines “the role played in wealth creation by cultural tourism, in the form of familiarisation with our cultural heritage [...], as well as travel related to language learning.” The emphasis is on national cultural heritage protection and on “promotion of the cultural content of a given region” at home and abroad, which also results in a need for language learning. It highlights the necessity of improving education systems in Member States in order to enable students of culture and the arts “to acquire a complete training which takes account of today’s professional needs” as well as “the skills which are a prerequisite for starting up a CCI enterprise”. In this regard and in this place we want to quote words by Viscount Etienne Davignon (2007:3), a chairman of an expert group established by the European Commission named the Business Forum on Multilingualism: “Without mutual understanding, we are unable to live and work together. In a Union where diversity is cherished, a *lingua franca* can never be enough to satisfy every communication need. Languages provide the keys to the cultures they represent. Multilingualism fosters openness and tolerance but will also open doors to new markets and new business opportunities.”

Supporting CCI also emphasises international cooperation between individual actors, whether through cross-border or broader cooperation as well as cooperation with third countries. This also requires knowledge and active use of foreign languages. The EU also encourages the innovation of existing study programmes and the provision of multidisciplinary education based on interdisciplinarity.

### 2.1. Place of arts in learning foreign languages

This part of the paper is devoted to the teaching of foreign languages in the framework of the Translation and Interpreting programme at the Faculty of Arts, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, more specifically at the Department of Romance Studies. Graduates of this field of study acquire a theoretical and practical understanding of linguistics, literary science and translation studies. They can then apply this knowledge in social areas, diplomacy, foreign trade, tourism and culture. Given the topic of our paper, we will address the last two areas. As a matter of principle, foreign languages in our programme are taught in conjunction with the culture of the language’s home country. This is also reflected in our programmes’ names, e.g. Italian Language and Culture, French Language and Culture, etc. They deal mainly with material culture, which we understand as the sum of material assets and heritage (technology, buildings, art and handicraft works) along with intellectual culture, which is the sum of knowledge in the fields of science, arts and social life as such (customs, traditions, social organisation). Because of the ongoing development and differentiation of art (with new art forms, branches, styles and programmes continually being created) and the fact that any classification is merely approximate and imperfect, we focus on spatial art among the types of arts based on image creation, its basic divisions being painting, sculpture and architecture (visual arts); time-based arts including music and literature; and spatial-and-time-based arts including dance, performing, film and television art. Of the many options for integrating the arts into language learning, we will mention several. As we brainstormed ways to prepare students for work in the areas of culture or tourism, we came up with the idea of involving students in the creation of simulated tours of cities or regions in the form of PowerPoint presentations – essentially simulated escort interpreting in a classroom environment. This allowed us to combine learning about the visual arts of their home country and other countries with learning foreign technical terminology from the fields of architecture, sculpture and painting. The tours would not have been possible without mentioning the customs and traditions in the given town or region and important local public and cultural figures.

Literary translation classes which follow up on the knowledge acquired from literature classes, are another example of combining languages with arts and culture. We would also like to mention so-called tandem learning where two students with different proficiency levels of a language (one a native speaker, the other a learner of the language; two languages are always combined and one of the languages is always foreign to one of the two) exchange information on various topics in the process of conversation and teach and correct one another. Topics for conversation can be also directed toward culture and the arts.

### 3. Conclusion

Creative industries represented by creative and cultural sectors are a backbone of the EU’s economy as well as that of other developed regions around the world. We believe that irrespective of the negative phenomena related to

gentrification, supporting the creative economy is justified. We can only hope that in the near future political representatives will come up with policies which will lead not only to the creation of wealth, the sustainment of employment and the reduction of unemployment, but will also be socially just.

With regards to incorporating arts in language teaching in the study of translation and interpreting we believe that art in all its spatial, time-based and spatial-and-time-based forms (despite the fact that we have only covered some of them in our paper) needs to be included in language learning, as it brings with it a great amount of creativity – the thong that makes today's world go round. We would also like to highlight an important fact, in spite of the constant appeals by European institutions for the support of cultural and language diversity the English language is becoming the primary communication language in almost all areas. However, French and Italian are traditionally considered languages of the arts, fashion and design, as well as diplomacy in the case of French. We believe that if a language should slowly disappear from life, it will result in the slow but certain death of the related culture in the long run, and this will ultimately lead to uniformity and the great impoverishment of the world.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to Daniela Ovárová, Daniela Šinková and Michael Dove for their enthusiastic help with the translation of the present paper into English and with proofreading.

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